

CITIZENS' ELECTION PROGRAM THE LINCOLN ACT

**HB 3935 – Representative Will Burns
SB 1947 – Senator Jacqueline Collins**

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1) What is the Lincoln Act?

The Lincoln Act would create a voluntary public financing system called the Citizens' Election Program, which provides candidates for Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Attorney General, Secretary of State, Comptroller, Treasurer, State Senator, and State Representative the option to forego special interest funding of their campaigns without having to unilaterally disarm. It would establish guidelines for raising qualifying contributions to finance campaign start-up expenses in increments from \$5 up to \$500 per individual. It would also specify the minimum number of contributors a candidate would be required to garner, in order to demonstrate viability as a candidate and be eligible to receive public funds.

Once qualified, candidates would receive two established benefits in return for giving up large donations. They would receive a large lump sum grant. In addition, participating candidates will qualify to receive matching funds, based on a 3:1 match on additional small donations of up to \$100. Candidates may receive up to two times the initial lump sum grant from the Citizens' Election Fund (CEF). Once the public matching funds hit their cap, participating candidates will still be able to collect and spend small donor contributions. The combination of the lump sum grant and matching funds will apply to both the primary and general elections.

2) Why do we need clean elections?

The costs of campaigns are rapidly spiraling out of control. Members are being forced to spend more and more time raising money rather than legislating. As the costs rise and the reliance on lobbyists and wealthy donors increase, public opinion regarding the strength of our democracy sours.

The Lincoln Act would restore public confidence in government and the political process by allowing qualified candidates to receive campaign funds from the Citizens' Election Fund instead of asking for money from special interests. In return, participating candidates would voluntarily agree to limit their campaign spending to the amount allocated to them. This voluntary alternative to traditional privately financed campaigns would free candidates from the incessant, time-consuming money chase that has tainted public perceptions of elected officials and fostered abuses that undermine our democracy. Candidates could instead devote their time and energy to talking with their constituents about the issues that are important to them. Under a public financing model, candidates may better harness the power of small dollar political donors, making a contribution from a factory worker or a waitress just as valuable as one from a lobbyist or corporate CEO.

3) Would the Citizens' Election Program mandate participation?

No. The system is voluntary, and only candidates that choose to participate and qualify will be considered clean elections candidates.

4) How does a candidate qualify for the clean elections' benefits?

To demonstrate viability as a candidate, a candidate must gather a specified minimum number of donors to contribute \$5 to \$500. Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Attorney General, State Comptroller, State Treasurer, and Secretary of State candidates must collect contributions from at least 3,500 people, State Senate candidates must collect contributions from at least 1,000 people, and State Representative candidates must collect donations from at least 500 people; 80% of contributors must reside in the state of Illinois.

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5) How much funding does a participating candidate receive?

Office	Contested Primary	Contested Primary (Overly Partisan District*)	Uncontested Primary	Contested General	Uncontested General
Governor	\$1.25 million	N/A	\$375,000	\$3 million	\$1 million
Lt. Governor	\$425,000	N/A	\$375,000	N/A	N/A
Statewide Officers	\$425,000	N/A	\$375,000	\$1 million	\$500,000
State Senator	\$300,000	\$400,000	\$50,000	\$300,000	\$90,000
State Representative	\$150,000	\$200,000	\$25,000	\$150,000	\$45,000

* Overly Partisan District is defined as a district where the vote totals of one established party from the previous general election in the district served by said office exceeds any other established party's vote totals by at least twenty percentage points.

6) How could a participating candidate compete against a self-funding millionaire?

A clean elections candidate would qualify for an increased match from the Citizens' Election Fund, as well as an increase in the maximum match grant permitted if competing against a non-participating candidate that funnels personal funds in excess of a threshold amount defined as \$.04 multiplied by the eligible, voting aging population plus \$100,000.

	Match Ratio	Maximum Match Grant
2 to 4 Times Threshold	4:1	1.25 Times
4 to 10 Times Threshold	5:1	1.5 Times
10 Times Threshold	6:1	2 Times

7) Is the Citizens' Election Program constitutional?

Yes. Since it is an optional system it would pass the most commonly-cited constitutionality test established in *Buckley v. Valeo*.

8) How would the Citizen's Election Program be paid for?

A budget reflects a state's priorities; public financing is the cost we must pay to stop corruption in Illinois – a top priority for Illinoisans. We are exploring several funding sources, including voluntary donations and an income tax checkoff program, to pay for the program.

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9) Has the clean elections concept been piloted successfully somewhere?

Yes. The following table summarizes the clean election systems that have already been implemented at the state and local levels. The experiences of Arizona, Connecticut, and Maine, in particular, have been overwhelmingly positive. 81% of the members in the Connecticut General Assembly were elected in 2008 as clean elections candidates.

State/ Locality	Electoral Contest(s) for which Public Funding is Available	Method of Approval?	Year Approved	Year Implemented
Arizona	Statewide and legislative races	Ballot initiative	1998	2000
Connecticut	Statewide and legislative races	Legislation	2005	2008
Maine	Statewide and legislative races	Ballot initiative	1996	2000
New Jersey	Legislative (pilot project)	Legislation	2004	2005
New Mexico	Public Regulation Commission	Legislation	2003	2005
North Carolina	Judicial elections	Legislation	2002	2004
Vermont	Governor and lt. governor	Legislation	1997	2000
Albuquerque, N.M.	City races	Ballot initiative	2005	2006
Portland, Ore.	City races	Legislation	2005	2006